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IRON MAN
ARMORED ADVENTURES
ON DVD
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McKEEVER ★ BALDEON ★ SOTOMAYOR

NOMAD™

GIRL WITHOUT A WORLD

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FROM THE SECRET FILES OF RICKI BARNES A.K.A. ***NOMAD***...

I heart dishwashers

Dear Journal,

Everybody hates high school. I get that. I'm not looking for sympathy, but most high-schoolers have it pretty easy compared to me.

after school job? ✓

Mediocre status in the hierarchy of coolness? ✓

Overbearing teachers? ✓

My Cap in the good ole days

See, I've got all the normal high school stuff going on, but then I've got some other things going on, too...

Stuck in a different universe, as a nondescript teenager, when you used to be Captain America's ridiculously awesome sidekick? ✓

what does she do if she's gotta pee?

Not being able to meet the Captain America from this world because some leather-clad chick named **Black Widow** won't let you? ✓

But while I might not be in the big leagues here--not yet anyway--school's got some challenges of its own. Like the new class president, Desmond Daniels, brainwashing kids from every social stratum to do "their civic duty". Weird...

On the plus side, though, here my "brother" John's a sweetie. Of course, he doesn't know he's my brother, since I never existed before in this world. Wait. Did I just call my brother a "sweetie"? Euuuuu. That's so gross.

When Worlds Collide

Part Two of NOMAD: Girl Without a World

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DO YOU SEE IT NOW? THIS *AIN'T* JUST A FASHION STATEMENT, RIKKI. WE'RE GONNA CHANGE THE *ENTIRE PLANET.*

AND THAT'S MY BROTHER, *JOHN,* BEING A COMPLETE AND UTTER TOOL.

PAR FOR THE COURSE WITH HIM, REALLY.

THIS IS ME, *CLEARLY* HAVING THE TIME OF MY LIFE.

THAT'S RIGHT, LITTLE SIS. YOU GOT A *NUCLEAR MISSILE* STRAPPED TO YOUR BACK.

BACK THEN, IN MY HOME DIMENSION, JOHN HAD GOTTEN HIMSELF RECRUITED INTO SOME NEO-NAZI SKINHEAD HULLABALOO LED BY THIS WWII FREAKSHOW CALLED THE *RED SKULL.*

I'D LIKE TO THINK JOHN WAS UNDER THE SKULL'S INFLUENCE THAT DAY AND *THAT'S* WHY HE WAS ALL COOL WITH ME HITCHING A RIDE ON A NUKE.

IN A REALLY BIZARRE WAY, THOUGH, I GUESS I OWE HIM. 'CAUSE IF IT WASN'T FOR HIM...

...I WOULDN'TA MET *CAPTAIN AMERICA* AND BECOME HIS SPIFFY NEW SIDEKICK, *BUCKY,* NOW WOULD I?

STILL, IF I GOT TO HAVE MY *PICK* OF THE INFINITE MULTIVERSAL VARIATIONS ON *JOHN BARNES, OLDER BROTHER*...

AND IF I WANTED JUST A WATER? THAT'S HOW MUCH?

SHE'LL HAVE A STRAWBERRY BANANA SMOOTHIE. PUT IT ON MINE.

...THEN, YEAH. THIS ONE, PLEASE.

ARMED FORCES CAREER CENTER

ANOTHER THING I DON'T GET, RIGHT, IS THAT NO ONE HAD EVEN *HEARD* OF *DESMOND DANIELS* BEFORE THE ELECTION AND *NOW* IT'S LIKE ALL THESE *MINDLESS ZOMBIES* WANT TO LAY IN FRONT OF A *BUS* FOR HIM OR WHATEVER!

I MEAN, WHAT SORT OF POWER DOES HE *HAVE* OVER THEM?

BIG APPLE COFFEE

CLOSED

OF COURSE, I *COULD* JUST GO BACK TO THE DARK DEPTHS UNDER THE SCHOOL AND FIND OUT FOR MYSELF WHAT'S UP.

BUT AFTER WHAT HAPPENED THE LAST TIME? NOT AN EXCITING PROSPECT.

RIKKI, IT'S *HIGH SCHOOL.*

YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER THAT MOST OF US *ARE* MINDLESS ZOMBIES.

NO CONSPIRACY THEORIES. NO PUPPET MASTERS. IT'S JUST THAT WE'RE ACTIVELY *LOOKING* FOR SOMETHING OR SOMEONE TO FOLLOW.

NOT ME. I'M MY OWN PERSON.

OH, I KNOW IT. YOU'RE KINDA LIKE AN OPEN BOOK TO ME...

DOES HE SUSPECT? SOMEWHERE DEEP DOWN INSIDE, DOES HE KNOW WHO I AM?

JOHN...?

WHAT IS IT? SOMETHING WRONG?

I WAS...

WE'VE BEEN HANGING OUT A LOT LATELY, SO I HOPE IT'S OKAY TO ASK...

WHY ARE YOU A FOSTER CHILD?

I DON'T MEAN TO--

NO, IT'S OKAY. I JUST DIDN'T EXPECT...

I'M...WHERE I AM NOW BECAUSE MY PARENTS--THEY'RE BOTH DEAD.

MY DAD, HE DIED IN THOSE TERRORIST BOMBINGS A WHILE BACK IN PHILLY, WHERE I USED TO LIVE.* AND BEFORE THAT, MY MOM...

*BACK IN **CAPTAIN AMERICA** #6.

...SHE DIED IN CHILD-BIRTH.

BOTH HER AND MY LITTLE SISTER.

HEY. HEY, IT'S OKAY. I'VE PRETTY MUCH FOUND MY **PEACE** WITH IT, AND MY **FOSTER PARENTS** ARE--

IT'S...IT'S NOT THAT, IT'S...

RIKKI...

BWOOOOM

OWW...

JOHN?

OHMYGOD. OHMYGOD. WHAT'S GOING--?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT DAY IT IS?

JOHN!!

THERE WAS A **BOMB** ACROSS THE STREET. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

FORGET ABOUT **ME**--

MISS, I'M AN OFF-DUTY EMT, OKAY? I'LL DO EVERY-THING I **CAN** FOR YOUR FRIEND--

BUT--

--BUT RIGHT NOW, YOU NEED TO **STAY DOWN** AND GET TO THE **BACK** OF THE **STORE.**

I'VE **GOT** THIS.

NO.

I DO.

HOW **MANY** OF YOUR YOUNG HAVE ALREADY WALKED THROUGH THE DOORS OF THIS **RECRUITMENT FACILITY** TO BE **CONSCRIPTED** AND THEN SENT OVERSEAS TO DIE AND TO KILL **OTHER** CONSCRIPTS, ALL IN THE NAME OF AMERICA'S **NEO-IMPERIALISM?**

HOWEVER MANY, I SAY THERE WILL BE **NO MORE!**

DISMANTLE YOUR GOVERNMENT FOR **SLAUGHTERING** YOUR CHILDREN!

THANK THE **FLAG-SMASHER** FOR WORKING TO SAVE THEM!

I WAS **WONDERING** WHEN YOU'D FINALLY REFER TO YOURSELF IN THE THIRD PERSON SO I'D KNOW WHAT TO CALL YA...

...NOW PUT DOWN THE MACE AND STOP MAKING WITH THE GROSS STUPIDITY!

WHICH OF US IS TRULY STUPID? YOUR GOVERNMENT WOULD SEND YOU TO DIE, LITTLE GIRL.

YEAH. SAYS THE GUY WHO IS PRESENTLY ATTEMPTING TO MASH MY BRAIN MEATS...!

THOKK

WHAT IS IT WITH YOU SUPER HERO KIDS THESE DAYS AND YOUR BLIND PATRIOTISM?* DON'T YOU SEE WHAT THE AMERICAN NATION IS DOING TO THE WORLD?

RIGHT NOW I SEE A COSTUMED JUICER ENDANGERING THE LIVES OF PERFECTLY INNOCENT PEOPLE SO HE CAN HAVE A SOAPBOX TO WHINE ON...

KWAMM

*FLAG SMASHER HAS MOST RECENTLY CROSSED THE RUNAWAYS, THE LIBERTEENS, AND ARAÑA.

...AAND THAT'S PRETTY MUCH IT.

FEELS SO STRANGE IN THE NEW COSTUME. SURE, IT'S PRETTY MUCH THE SAME AS MY SHREDDED BUCKY DUDS, BUT THEY'RE NOT THE SAME.

FOR EXAMPLE...

...THIS ONE HAS THROWING DISCS THAT I CLEARLY HAVE YET TO PRACTICE WITH. IF CAP SAW ME RIGHT NOW, HE'D CRINGE...

TINK

ARE THOSE THE BEST TOYS YOU'VE GOT?

BECAUSE I HAVE A LOT MORE TOYS.

GAHH!

FFFWASH

FOR MY MESSAGE TO BE HEARD--FOR THE WORLD TO BE TRULY FREE--A STEEP PRICE MUST BE PAID.

YOU'RE SIMPLY PART OF THE COST NOW.

SHFFK-KT

DUDE--ARE YOU *TOTALLY DERANGED?*

KRAK

YOU PUT ON A CAPE AND A MASK AND TALK ABOUT *FREEDOM* AND STUFF, BUT THAT *DOESN'T* MAKE YOUR ACTIONS HEROIC OR EVEN *REMOTELY* OKAY.

IT JUST MAKES YOU *MORE FLAMBOYANT* THAN THE *AVERAGE TERRORIST!*

ERAKKT

MISSED ME, JERKWAD.

SO I DID...

...NOT THAT I WAS *AIMING* FOR YOU.

NO!

KRRRMM

HANG ON, GUYS! I'M COMIN'!

ALL YOUR ***STRUGGLING***, AND WHAT DID IT BRING YOU? A TASTE OF DEATH AND LITTLE ELSE!

WHEN AMERICA ***FINALLY*** CRUMBLES AT THE HANDS OF THE FREE AND THE BRAVE, YOU'LL ***SEE***, LITTLE GIRL! AND MAYBE ***THEN*** YOU'LL UNDERSTAND...

FWAKK

...THAT THE FLA

DAMN, BUT YOU SURE TALK A LOT.

GOT YOUR GUY HERE. NOT THE FLAG-SMASHER OF MY DAY, BUT JUST AS *FULL* OF HIMSELF, I SEE...

SORRY? WHAT DID YOU--?

OH--!

NOW *THAT* IS AN INTERESTING CHOICE OF COSTUME, YOUNG LADY.

NOT SURE WHAT MADE YOU THINK YOU COULD CLAIM THE *NOMAD* IDENTITY, BUT...

HEY, YOU OKAY?

ARE...

ARE YOU... *SAM WILSON,* BY ANY CHANCE?

I...

WHO *ARE* YOU?

AFTER SEEING THAT JOHN IS OKAY AND IN GOOD HANDS, I TELL FALCON ABOUT ME--ABOUT WHERE I COME FROM, AND HOW I CAME TO KNOW HIM THERE.

HE TAKES IT AMAZINGLY IN STRIDE.

SO NOW THAT YOU'RE HERE, RIKKI...WHAT IS IT YOU'RE GONNA DO?

I MEAN, *ASIDE* FROM BEING NOMAD.

WELL, SEE, THAT'S THE THING...

SOMEONE'S BASICALLY *FORCING* THIS IDENTITY ON ME. I FEEL LIKE SOMEONE ELSE IS PULLING MY STRINGS.

I *HATE* THAT.

BUT, YOU KNOW, WHO'S THIS "SOMEONE"?

SURE, I GET THAT, AND YOU *COULD* LOOK AT IT THAT WAY...

...*OR* YOU COULD CONSIDER THAT SOMEONE FELT YOU WERE *WORTHY* OF FOLLOWING IN STEVE'S FOOTSTEPS.

IT'S A GOOD QUESTION. BUT SEEING HOW *REDWING'S* SO KEEN ON YOU?

I'D SAY WHOEVER IT WAS COULD VERY WELL BE ON THE MONEY.

CALL ME ANYTIME, RIKKI.

IS HE JUST TRYING TO MAKE ME FEEL BETTER? OR IS SOMEONE OUT THERE ACTUALLY WATCHING OVER ME?

AT THIS POINT, I DON'T CARE. AT THIS MOMENT IN TIME, DESPITE THE *ATOM BOMB* I JUST HAD DROPPED ON MY *SOUL*...

...I'D RATHER SOMEONE WAS ROOTING FOR MY BIG BROTHER.

--ATTACK THAT PLACED OUR CLASSMATE IN THE HOSPITAL, WHOM I UNDERSTAND WILL BE OUT SOON.

ISN'T THAT *RIGHT*, MISS BAINES?

MISS *BAINES*?

MM...?

OH, UH, YES. THAT'S WHAT I HEAR, MISTER--

SORRY, *DOCTOR* POWERS.

YES. WELL. IT IS NOT MY WISH TO DWELL ON THE *OUTCOME* OF THE ATTACK, BUT RATHER THE *INTENT*.

WHAT DOES THIS SO-CALLED FLAG-SMASHER HAVE TO SAY? WHAT DOES HE HAVE TO *GAIN* FROM SUCH RASH ACTIONS?

ANYONE?

FLAG-SMASHER

OKAY, THEN...

THIS MAN IS A FAIRLY *COMMON* BREED OF TERROR-MONGER CLASSIFIED AS A *RADICAL ANTI-NATIONALIST*--

HE'S *SPEAKING!*

DESMOND DANIELS IS GIVING A *SPEECH* IN *FIRST LUNCH!*

SWEET!

HOLD ON, NOW--

YOU CAN'T JUST--!

MANY OF YOU HAVE ASKED WHAT YOU CAN *DO* FOR ME. HOW YOU CAN *REALLY DIG DOWN* AND *SUPPORT* MY BID FOR STUDENT BODY PRESIDENT.

BY THE NUMBER OF YOU STANDING HERE BEFORE ME NOW, I CAN *SEE* YOU'VE BEEN DOING YOUR PART. YOU'RE *SPREADING* OUR MESSAGE OF CIVIC DUTY AND PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY.

AND MAKE NO MISTAKE, IT IS OUR MESSAGE. THIS IS NOT MY CAMPAIGN. IT'S *OURS.*

TOGETHER, WE HAVE TURNED FEW INTO MANY. WE HAVE MADE SOMETHING FROM VIRTUALLY *NOTHING.*

BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY...

...WE HAVE COME *THIS* MUCH CLOSER TO REALIZING THE UNPARALLELED SENSE OF *ACCOMPLISHMENT* AND *PRIDE* THAT COMES WITH BEING AN *ACTIVE PART* OF *OUR COMMUNITY!*

AND WHAT DOES THAT MAKE YOU WANT TO SAY?

I WILL! MAKE! A DIFFERENCE! *I WILL! MAKE! A DIFFERENCE!* *I WILL! MAKE! A DIFFERENCE!*

WHAT DO YOU ALL THINK YOU'RE DOING??

THAT, YOUNG MAN, IS A *TABLE*. IT IS *NOT* MEANT FOR STANDING UPON.

AND AS FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO SHOULD BE IN *CLASS*--

DUDE, YOU CAN'T *DENY* US OUR *FREE AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY!* WE HAVE *RIGHTS*, AND--

WRONG, MISTER SURMAN. THIS IS A *HIGH SCHOOL. YOU* ARE A *STUDENT*, AND WE HAVE *RULES* THAT YOU ARE REQUIRED TO FOLLOW IN ORDER TO *REMAIN* A STUDENT.

YOU'RE JUST A *SCARED OLD MAN!* AFRAID OF THE *POTENTIAL* WE HAVE TO *CHANGE* THE *TIDE* OF--

NO. IT'S OKAY, SURMAN. THERE'S NO NEED TO ARGUE.

DOCTOR POWERS IS RIGHT.

IT WAS *WRONG* OF ME TO PLACE ALL OF YOU IN THIS POSITION. WHAT BEGAN AS A SIMPLE CONVERSATION BETWEEN A FEW OF US, I *ALLOWED* TO GROW OUT OF CONTROL.

PLEASE, GO BACK TO YOUR CLASSROOMS.

JUST THE RIGHT MIX OF AUTHENTIC HUMILITY AND POLISHED CHARM.

UP

UR

AY

HE'S *GOOD*. IF I WASN'T SO SUSPICIOUS FROM THE START I PROBABLY WOULDN'T HAVE SEEN IT.

THESE GUYS, MY CLASSMATES...TURNS OUT THEY *ARE* ZOMBIES.

HIS ZOMBIES.

BUT HOW'S HE DOING IT? AND, MAYBE MORE IMPORTANTLY...

...WHAT'S HIS *ENDGAME?*

CONGRATULATIONS, ALL OF YOU.

WHAT BEGAN WITH YOU FIRST FIVE GREW INTO DOZENS, AND NOW YOUR CONVERSIONS NUMBER INTO THE *HUNDREDS.*

CONVERTS ARE BRANCHING OUT ON THEIR OWN, EXPONENTIALLY PROPAGATING THE *DESMOND DANIELS MESSAGE.*

AT THIS POINT, *VICTORY* IS ALL BUT ASSURED...

...BUT THAT'S NOT *ENOUGH.*

FOR THIS MESSAGE TO BE SENT AS LOUDLY AND AS CLEARLY AS POSSIBLE, THE ELECTION'S FINAL RESULTS MUST BE EPIC.

AM I *UNDERSTOOD?*

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

Yes.

GOOD.

IT'S GOING JUST AS I ENVISIONED IT WOULD. IT'S ALMOST A DISAPPOINTMENT, REALLY, HOW EASILY IT'S GONE...

...ALMOST.

THIS IS A CRITICAL PHASE WE'RE ENTERING, ***MAD DOG***. WE CAN'T ALLOW ANY UNACCOUNTED-FOR ***X-FACTOR*** TO MUDDY THINGS.

RED HAIR.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE ***SECRET EMPIRE*** WOULD DO WITH YOU IF SHE ***UPSETS*** THE RESULTS?

YOUR... "ENHANCEMENTS" AFTER YOUR LAST FAILURE WERE JUST A ***TASTE*** OF WHAT THEY'RE CAPABLE OF.

WIFE.

YES, YOUR WIFE. SHE LOVED YOU ***UNCONDITIONALLY*** UNTIL YOU WERE MADE INTO A ***WEREDOG***, DIDN'T SHE?

IT MUST BE QUITE A STRAIN ON YOU, KNOWING THAT SHE'S FOUND ***HAPPINESS*** IN THE ARMS OF ANOTHER.

THERE ARE ***MANY*** FATES WORSE THAN DEATH. WE DO WHAT WE CAN TO AVOID THEM, DON'T WE?

THE GIRL. RED HAIR. THIS IS HER, CORRECT?

DIFFERENT... NO.

SAME.

THEN YOU'RE *IN LUCK*, MAD DOG. I'M FAIRLY SURE I KNOW *JUST* WHO THIS PLUCKY HERO IS.

"AND HOW TO BREAK HER."

HI.

IS THIS THE *TRAUMA* WARD?

HEHH... DORK.

THEY SAID I'M PRETTY LUCKY. THE GLASS DIDN'T REACH ANY IMPORTANT BRAIN PARTS.

THAT'S REALLY GREAT, JOHN.

YEAH...

...I TOLD THEM I ALREADY *KNEW* THAT BECAUSE THE GLASS WAS IN MY HEAD, *NOT* MY BUTT.

YOU KNOW HOW PEOPLE ALWAYS SAY THEY FEEL LIKE A ***DIFFERENT PERSON*** AFTER THEY SURVIVE AN ACCIDENT?

I USED TO THINK THAT WAS SO DUMB. WE ARE WHO WE ARE, AND THAT'S THAT, RIGHT?

BUT I GUESS IT'S A CLICHÉ FOR A ***REASON.*** YOU ***DO*** SEE THINGS DIFFERENTLY. YOU SEE YOUR OWN ***LIFE*** DIFFERENTLY. YOU REALLY SEE WHO YOUR ***FRIENDS*** ARE.

JOHN...I'M SORRY I ABANDONED YOU IN THE CAFE. AND I'M SORRY I DIDN'T COME VISIT YOU IN THE HOSPITAL.

IT'S JUST... THERE ARE THINGS ABOUT ME...

I DUNNO. I DUNNO HOW TO EXPLAIN IT.

HEY. COME ON, NOW.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO EXPLAIN ***ANYTHING*** TO ME, RIKKI BAINES. I UNDERSTAND...

WHOA!!

WH-- WHAT WAS THAT??

WHAT? I THOUGHT--?

I THOUGHT THERE WAS A REAL CONNECTION BETWEEN US! TELL ME I'M NOT IMAGINING--

NO! NO, IT'S THERE, JOHN, IT IS! BUT IT'S NOT WHAT YOU--

IT'S--

YOU'RE...

YOU'RE LIKE A BROTHER TO ME.

...

A BROTHER.

JOHN--

COULD YOU LEAVE, PLEASE?

PLEASE.

TRUST ME, JOHN, YOU'RE NOT REALLY--

I WAS WRONG. THIS WORLD ISN'T PURGATORY.

IT'S HELL.

HELL IS A PLACE WHERE YOUR LOVED ONES ARE DEAD AND EVERY OPPORTUNITY TURNS OUT TO BE AN ELABORATE PRANK DESIGNED TO GET YOUR HOPES UP JUST HIGH ENOUGH TO KNOCK YOU BACK DOWN, HARD.

HELL IS CUSTOM TAILORED TO ENSURE THE CONSTANT TORMENT AND AGONY OF EACH AND EVERY SOUL.

MY ONLY OPTION IS TO GET SOME AIR. CLEAR THE COBWEBS. GET THE ENDORPHINS PUMPING.

KEEP MY MOTOR SKILLS BUSY SO I CAN REALLY *THINK*.

THERE'S GOT TO BE SOMETHING I CAN DO TO MAKE THINGS BETTER. THERE HAS TO BE A ***TETHER*** TO KEEP ME FROM DRIFTING FURTHER INTO NOTHINGNESS.

THAT DOESN'T HELP ME ***NOW***.

GIVEN TIME, I CAN PATCH THINGS UP WITH JOHN. GET HIM TO SEE THAT THAT HIS FEELINGS TOWARD ME ARE ACTUALLY FRATERNAL.

BUT DESMOND DANIELS MIGHT. DROPPING MYSELF DEEP INTO A MYSTERY OR A MISSION WAS ***ALWAYS*** GOOD MEDICINE FOR PUTTING ALL MY PERSONAL TROUBLES ON THE BACK BURNER.

SO, DANIELS. OKAY.

SOLD.

ARE YOU GUYS SURE ABOUT THIS?

ABSOLUTELY. HE PUTS ON A GOOD FRONT, BUT THAT'S BECAUSE HE *HAS* TO. HE HAS TO STAY *ABOVE* THE FRAY.

IT'S TRUE. HE WON'T SAY IT IN PUBLIC, BUT DESMOND *WANTS* US TO ACT. HE WANTS US TO BE *STRONG*.

WHEN HE'S TALKING ABOUT OUR DUTY, HE ISN'T JUST TALKING ABOUT VOLUNTEERISM AND REINFORCING MORAL PRINCIPLES. HE'S TALKING ABOUT *CHANGE*.

REAL CHANGE THAT STARTS *HERE*, WITH *US*, AND THEN *SPREADS* LIKE WILDFIRE.

HEY, SURMAN. GUYS.

OH, IT'S YOU. DID YOU WANT TO JOIN THE DISCUSSION, OR...?

I'LL JUST LISTEN FOR NOW. I'D LIKE TO HEAR THE REST OF YOUR PITCH, 'CAUSE FROM WHAT I'VE HEARD SO FAR...

...IT SOUNDS LIKE IT MIGHT BE RIGHT UP MY ALLEY.